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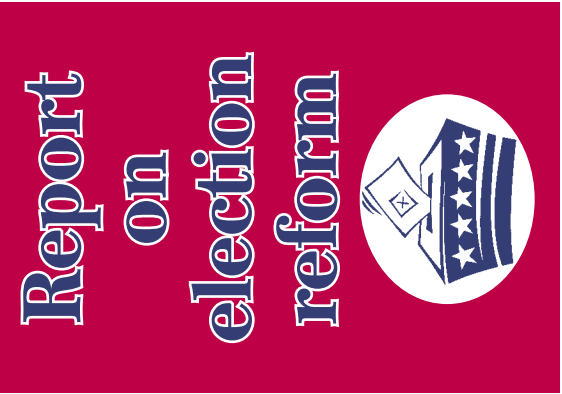
Representatives
Pat Sullivan and Geoff Simpson
PO Box 40600
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**Geoff Simpson
and Pat Sullivan**

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Report on election reform



**Representative
Pat
Sullivan**



**Representative
Geoff
Simpson**

Dear neighbors,

It is an honor and a privilege to represent the citizens of the 47th District in the House of Representatives.

As the 2005 session gets underway, one of the most important issues is election reform. The incredibly close election for governor and the problems in King County and other counties across the state has shaken the confidence in our election system. We must take action to make sure every vote is counted correctly and accurately and regain the confidence of voters.

This newsletter is meant to give you the tools and information you need as a citizen. There are almost 1,000 lobbyists in Olympia who work full-time for special interests, and they'll oppose many reforms to clean up politics and elections. It will take citizens like yourself, standing up and speaking out, to get real reforms passed.

Look inside for a quick description, in plain English, of what the issues are and what major reforms the House and Senate are considering. We've also included a tear-out card for you to share your thoughts and ideas about how to strengthen our democracy.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to serve you. We look forward to hearing your comments and ideas.

Sincerely,

Rep. Geoff Simpson
47th District

Rep. Pat Sullivan
47th District

Keeping In Touch

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Reps. Pat Sullivan and Geoff Simpson • 47th District



The Problem

What should happen when an election is this close and this contentious?

We trust and respect Republican Secretary of State Sam Reed – he was fair and even-handed – and the work of our 39 county auditors who run elections for a living.

Sam Reed and each of the county auditors certified the election results after the hand recount. They said it's the most accurate count for a statewide office because every ballot was machine counted twice, and counted by hand while volunteers from all political parties watched every move.

There have been a number of issues raised regarding military ballots, the use of provisional ballots, and the qualifications of voters in a number of counties.

The problem is what should happen when a candidate wants to contest the results of an election.



election. Voting for the delay would have violated our oath of office. It would be wrong for the partisan Legislature to grab the power to choose or delay governors – or any other office such as Secretary of State – from the voters. The framers of our state constitution were populists who feared too much power in one place, and we agree with them. So do a majority of the people we’ve heard from.

Where are we now?

We fully support a thorough and impartial review of the governor's election and the problems brought to light in King County and other counties across our state.

Dino Rossi is taking his case to a Superior Court judge in Chelan County, and ultimately the Supreme Court will decide the issue. We look forward to this impartial and nonpartisan scrutiny and will abide by and support their decision.

A clear need for reforms

Clearly, we need to adopt comprehensive election reform in our state that will prevent this sort of problem from occurring again. We also need to do a great deal of work to regain the confidence and trust of our voters.

This must be a top priority. We will work hard to see that we are successful this session. Your thoughts and ideas about this would be quite helpful. Please see the attached reply card.

Thank you for all of the comments you've already sent about election reform. This has been a very emotional and passionate issue and we respect the ideas and feelings of people on all sides of this issue.



Major reforms

Some of the reforms being considered in the House and Senate:

- *Move the primary to June* – This gives county auditors more time to send out absentee ballots, especially to our military voters overseas.
- *Uniform standards for counting votes statewide* – Today, each county has its own rules. This reform would pick the best rules and adopt them statewide.
- *A paper trail for electronic voting machines* – Other states have had big problems with electronic voting machines and we need to prevent those troubles.
- *Require absentee ballots to get returned earlier* – Part of the wait and delay comes from late absentee ballots trickling into auditor offices.
- *All vote-by-mail* – Oregon has changed to 100 percent vote-by-mail, as have some counties in our state like our neighbor, Pierce County. Some people would miss walking into the polling booth; other people think this idea boosts voter participation.
- *Take politics out of the Secretary of State's office* – Make it a non-partisan position so our elections aren't tainted by political pressure from either party.



The history of contested elections

Our state Constitution requires that the certified results be sent to the Legislature and signed by the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate. The Constitution also allows for a legislator to challenge the results of an election and call for a legislative inquiry.

In 1941 legislators challenged the election of our governor. A motion was made to reject the results of the race and form a joint committee to investigate the election. Following a spirited debate, the motion was turned down by a majority of legislators in the House and Senate and the certified election was signed.

On the second day of the current legislative session, a motion was made to delay the acceptance of the certified election for Governor. There was no call for an official inquiry or a committee to investigate the election.

The right place for any challenge is in our courts. The Constitution requires that we accept certified election results, and our state laws lay out the process for contesting an



What do you think?

We'd like to hear your comments and ideas. What election reforms would you support?

(Check all that apply)

- Take politics out of the Secretary of State's office
- Uniform standards for counting votes statewide
- A paper trail for electronic voting machine
- Move the primary to June
- Require absentee ballots get returned earlier
- All vote-by-mail

Other ideas and comments:

Please fill out, cut and return to us.